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Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

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AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
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AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LOURENCO MARQUES
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
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SUBJ: MEDIA REACTION- ANGOLA

1. DURING THE WEEK REPORTS ON DEVELOPMENTS IN ANGOLA CONTINUED TO BE
FEATURED PROMINENTLY ON FRONT PAGES OF SOUTH AFRICA'S NEWSPAPERS AND
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THOSE REPORTS SERVED AS SUBJECT MATTER FOR EDITORIAL COMMENT.

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2. FRON PAGE REPORT IN 'THE STAR'(12/17) SAID SOME CITIZEN FORCE UNITS UNDERGOING REFRESHER TRAINING WOULD BE REQUIRED TO SERVE IN THE "OPERATIONAL AREA" FOR THREE MONTHS INSTEAD OF THE USUAL THREE WEEKS. THE REPORT QUOTED DEFENSE MINISTER BOTHA AS SAYING "THESE ARRANGEMENTS ARE NECESSARY AND IN THE INTERESTS OF THE COUNTRY... I AM CONFIDENT THAT THE PUBLIC WILL SUPPORT THESE STEPS." THE REPORT NOTED THAT " AT LEAST TWENTY-TWO SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL SERVICEMEN" HAD BEEN KILLED IN THE SO-CALLED "OPERATIONAL AREA." THE REPORT ADDED THAT THE SERVICE PERIOD FOR A LIMITED NUMBER OF SERVICEMEN ALREADY IN SERVICE HAD BEEN EXTENDED BY ONE MONTH, SO THAT THOSE DUE TO DEMOBILIZE JANUARY 7 WOULD REMAIN ON ROLL UNTIL FEBRUARY 6.

3. FRONT PAGE REPORT IN THE 'RAND DAILY MAIL'(12/17) QUOTED ANGOLAN UNITA LEADER SAVIMBI AS SAYING ON UGANDAN RADIO THAT SOUTH AFRICAN TROOPS WERE " ABOUT 150 KILOMETERS INTO ANGOLA." SAVIMBI REPORTEDLY SAID"WE ARE VERY MUCH AWARE THAT SOUTH AFRICA HAS PENETRATED ANGOLA BUT SINCE ITS TROOPS ARE EQUIPPED WITH VERY SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS WE CANNOT FIGHT THEM."

4. VARIOUS PRESS REPORTS 12/16 SAID THAT THREE SOUTH AFRICAN AND 61"ENEMY" HAD BEEN KILLED IN THE "OPERATIONAL AREA." FURTHER REPORTS 12/18 AND 12/19 SAID SOUTH AFRICAN TROOPS HAD BEEN CAPTURED BY MPLA FORCES AND FLOWN TO LUANDA AND THEN TO LAGOS, NIGERIA. AS OF 12/18 ONLY FOUR SOUTH AFRICAN SOLDIERS WERE OFFICIALLY REPORTED MISSING BUT PRESS REPORTS 12/19 SAID ANOTHER FIFTY WOULD SOON BE BROUGHT TO LUANDA. DEFENSE MINISTER BOTHA HAS REPORTEDLY DISMISSED THIS CLAIM AS "ABSURD." PICTURES OF TWO HANDCUFFED SOUTH AFRICAN SOLDIERS, ALLEGEDLY IN LAGOS, APPEARED ON THE FRONT PAGES OF VARIOUS SOUTH AFRICAN PAPERS 12/19.

5. FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS FROM EDITORIAL COMMENT 12/17, 12/18 AND 12/19.
A. 'THE DAILY NEWS OF DURBAN (12/17)-"NO ONE DOUBTS THAT THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN THINKING HARD ABOUT THE ANGOLA WAR; BUT SURELY THE TIME HAS COME FOR A RE-THINK. THE PUBLIC HAS BEEN DENIED FULL INFORMATION; THE GOVERNMENT HAS USED THE DEFENCE ACT TO SUPPRESS NEWS FROM THE "OPERATIONAL AREA"-- WE DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE IT IS-- AND MINISTERS HAVE WARNED AGAINST ACCEPTING ALLEGEDLY PROPAGANDISTIC REPORTS." NOTING THE LACK OF DETAILS CONCERNING NATURE AND EXTENT OF
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SOUTH AFRICAN INVOLVEMENT IN ANGOLA THE NEWS CONCLUDED;" WE ARE IN ANGOLA, BUT HOW FAR IS YET ANOTHER SECRET; THE GOVERNMENT SAYS 30 KM, TO PROTECT A WATER SUPPLY SCHEME, UNITA'S DR.SAVIMBI SAYS 150 KM. THE CONFUSION IS COMPOUNDED BY THE RELUCTANCE OF OTHER COUNTRIES TO BE SEEN AS ALLIES OF SOUTH AFRICA'S. IF SOUTH AFRICA IS INDEED DEEP IN ANGOLA THIS CAN ONLY BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE IN THE LONG TERM. WITH FREINDS LIKE US WHO NEEDS ENEMIES. AS DR. SAVIMBI HAS FOUND. OUR BEST POLICY, SURELY

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IT TO HELP WHERE WE CAN WITH ADVICE AND EQUIPMENT BUT KEEP OUR
MEN ON THE BORDER."

B.THE 'RAND DAILY MAIL' (12/18)-" TWO NEW REPORTS YESTERDAY
INDICATED THAT SOUTH AFRICA'S INVOLVEMENT IN ANGOLA IS IN,
OR HAS SUDDENLY ENTERED, A DIMENSION NOT PREVIOUSLY KNOWM FIRST
WAS THE STATEMENT BY THE UNITA LEADER... THAT SOUTH AFRICAN TROOPS
HAVE MOVED ABOUT 150 KILOMETERS INTO ANGOLA. SECOND WAS THE MPLA
ANNOUNCEMENT IN LUANDA THAT FOUR SOUTH AFRICAN SOLDIERS HAD BEEN
CAPTURED... IN ADDITION, THERE IS THE UNEXPLAINED DEFENCE FORCE
REFERENCE THIS WEEK TO THE "ENEMY', INSTEAD OF THE USUAL
"TERRORIST" PHRASE, IN ANNOUNCING THE DEATHS OF THREE SOLDIERS.
'TERRORISTS' ARE THOSE SWAPO MEMBERS INFILTRATING THE BORDER.
WHO, AND WHERE, ARE THE 'ENEMY'? WHAT ALL THIS WOULD SEEM TO
POINT TO IS A SITUATION MARKEDLY DIFFERENT FROM WHAT THE GOVERNMENT
HAS, UNTIL NOW, BEEN TELLING THE PUBLIC. FOR WHAT HAS BEEN KNOWN
HERE IS THAT SOUTH AFRICAN TROOPS ARE GUARDING THE PUMPING STATION
AT CALUEQUE, A SHORT DISTANCE INSIDE ANGOLA; THAT SOUTH AFRICANS
ARE GUARDING THE NORTHERN SWA BORDER; AND THAT SOUTH AFRICANS ARE,
WHERE NECESSARY, ENGAGING IN THE 'HOT PURSUIT' OF TERRORISTS/
GUERRILLAS INTO ANGOLA. THE GOVERNMENT WILL UNDERSTAND THAT, IN
THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, GENERAL UNEASE INEVITABLY EXISTS. AND THAT
THIS CAN ONLY BE DEEPENED BY YESTERDAY'S ANNOUNCEMENT BY (DEFENCE
MINISTER) MR. BOTHA THAT SOME CITIZEN FORCE UNITS WILL SERVE IN
THE 'OPERATIONAL AREA' FOR THREE MONTHS INSTEAD OF THREE WEEKS.
OBVIOUSLY, A SITUATION OF GREAT DELICACY EXISTS IN AGNOLA. THIS
NOTWITHSTANDING, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE WISE TO CONSIDER TELLING
THE COUNTRY MORE ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING."

C. A NUMBER OF EDITORIALS CONTINUE TO LOOK TO AMERICAN ACTION
IN ANGOLA. THE AFRIKAANS NEWSPAPER BEELD (12/18)-" THE AMERICAN
STATNCE IS POTENTIALLY DECISIVE IN THIS EAST-WEST CONFLICT. THAT
IS WHY WE ARE WATCHING IT SO CLOSELY. THE SPECTRE OF A STRING
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OF COMMUNIST SATELLITE STATES STRETCHING RIGHT ACROSS THE CONTINENT
FROM LUANDA TO DAR ES SALAAM. WHICH PRIME MINISTER VORSTER WARNED
AGAINST, IS BEING INCREASINGLY RECOGNIZED BY THE KISSINGERS AND
MOYNIHANS OF AMERICA." BEELD WENT ON TO VISUALIZE "THE IMPERIALISTS
IN THE KREMLIN DRINKING VODKA TO THE HEALTH OF THE SEVEN MEMBERS
OF THE SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS" WHO VOTED TO
STOP U.S. ARMS SUPPLIES TO THE FORCES OPPOSING THE MPLA."THE
ATTITUDE OF THESE SEVEN 'DOVES' LENDS WEIGHT TO THE IMPRESSION
THAT THESE DAYS ONE HAS ONLY TO 'VIETNAM*' TO SEND AMERICA
SCURRYING AWAY, LEAVING YET ANOTHER STRATEGIC PART OF THE WORLD
TO THE RAMPANT COMMINISTS... THE TEST FOR THE WEST, AND MORE
PARTICULARLY FOR AMERICA AS LEADER OF THE WEST, IS WHETHER RUSSIA
IS TO BE LEFT TO PURSUE ITS AGGRESSIVE, IMPERIALISTIC AIMS IN
ANGOLA. AFTER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF KREMLIN HEGEMONY IN A PART
OF THE WORLD WHERE IT NEVER EXISTED BEFORE, THE WEST CAN EXPECT

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TO SEE ITS MOST VITAL ACEAN TRADE ROUTES EFFECTIVELY COME UNDER RUSSIAN CONTROL. EVEN MORE IMPORTANT THAN DETENTE BETWEEN EAST AND WEST IS THE INTERNATIONAL BALANCE OF POWER. THE CHOICE AMERICA MAKES IN THIS MATTER CAN DECIDE THE FUTURE OF A CONTINENT, AND THUS THAT OF THE WHOLE WEST. WHAT THE FREE WORLD IS CONCERNED ABOUT IS WHETHER AMERICA CAN BE WOKEN FROM ITS 'POST-VIETNAM HIBERNATION'."

D. BEELD (12/19)-"AMERICA DOES NOT WANT RUSSIA TO GET ITS WAY IN ANGOLA, BUT IMPORTANT CIRCLES IN THE U.S. WILL HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH STOPPING RUSSIA... BUT NOW THAT THERE IS TALK OF AMERICA SUSPENDING ALL FINANCIAL AND ARMS ASSISTANCE, THE TURMOIL CAN ONLY INTENSIFY THE THE CIVIL WAR DRAG ON LONDER. BUT EVEN WITHOUT DIRECT INTERVENTION, EVEN WITHOUT SENDING IN ITS OWN MEN, AMERICA CAN END THIS CIVIL WAR-- IN ITS OWN INTERESTS AND IN THE INTERESTS OF AFRICA. AMERICA CAN EQUIP THE ALLIES WITH WHAT IS NECESSARY-- OR IT CAN WITHHOLD DELIVERIES OF WHEAT TO THE SOVIETS UNTIL THEY GET OUT OF WEST AFRICA AND LET THE ANGOLANS SORT OUT THEIR WON PROBLEMS."

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